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News Release

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Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
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Washington, D.C. -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has named Peter H. Dougherty, a longtime advocate for the homeless, as coordinator for departmentwide programs for homeless veterans.

In announcing the appointment, VA Acting Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs John Hanson said: "Few are better prepared to lead VA's fight against homelessness than Pete Dougherty. His compassionate and dutiful work as a professional staff member at VA and in the U.S. House and Senate over the past 15 years has been pivotal in establishing and improving programs that provide a community lifeline to the 250,000 veterans on our streets without a home on any given night."

Since Feb. 1994, Dougherty has been program manager of the Vet HELP Program for the VA Maryland Health Care System and served as a special assistant on homelessness to VA's Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health. In these positions, Dougherty worked with existing programs and local partnerships on strategies to end homelessness among veterans.

From Feb. 1993 until Feb. 1994, Dougherty was a member of the staff of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, where he drafted legislation and prepared oversight and legislative hearings for a variety of programs administered by VA, including homelessness and mental health. Dougherty had the same duties from 1989 to 1993 as a staff member for U.S. Rep. Harley O. Staggers, Jr., (D-W.Va.) on the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Housing and Memorial Affairs.

Dougherty also served as a district director for Staggers from 1983 until 1985, establishing a district-wide casework and constituent referral system for the congressman.

A resident of Charles Town, W.Va., Dougherty graduated with honors from Davis chairman of the West Virginia Commission for Professional Teaching Standards; member of the Metropolitan Washington Council for Homeless Veterans; member and former president of the Charles Town Kiwanis Club; member and former president of the Davis and lay leader of the Asbury United Methodist Church in Charles Town. He is a past president of the West Virginia School Boards Association.

VA is the only federal agency that provides substantial hands-on assistance directly to homeless persons. Although limited to veterans and their dependents, VA's major homeless programs constitute the largest integrated network of homeless assistance programs in the country, offering an array of services and initiatives to help veterans recover from homelessness and live as self-sufficiently and independently as possible. These services include outreach and case management, treatment, rehabilitation, transitional residential care, therapeutic work and assistance with permanent housing.

Since 1987, VA has treated and assisted more than 250,000 homeless veterans. Of those completing VA programs, 40 percent had stable housing, and 40 percent were employed at discharge. Homeless veterans served by VA substantially improved their incomes, and most continue to use VA outpatient programs for the treatment of their medical or psychiatric problems.

To increase assistance and extend the continuum of care for homeless veterans, VA forged partnerships throughout the nation with veterans service organizations, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and community-based service providers. The growth in these alliances is reflected, in part, in VA's support for nearly 5,500 transitional and permanent beds for homeless veterans in urban and rural

communities throughout the country.

Since the first round of funding in fiscal year 1994, VA has awarded 101 grants totaling \$20 million to 84 nonprofit or government agencies in 36 states and the District of Columbia. When completed, these projects will provide approximately 1,700 community-based beds for homeless veterans.